

Tick Bites—They're Not Just About Lyme Disease

(NAPSA)—This time of year many of us head outside to enjoy a hike in the woods or explore our natural surroundings. Living among all this natural beauty is the tick. A full-grown tick is no larger than a sesame seed, but it can carry along with it deadly diseases that can be transmitted to humans and animals.

“When most people think of ticks these days, they think of Lyme Disease, an infection that is spread by deer ticks found in nearly any woody area in the northeast and northcentral United States,” said Russell Harris, MD, of the American College of Emergency Physicians. “However, a tick bite, although usually harmless, can also cause many other diseases.”

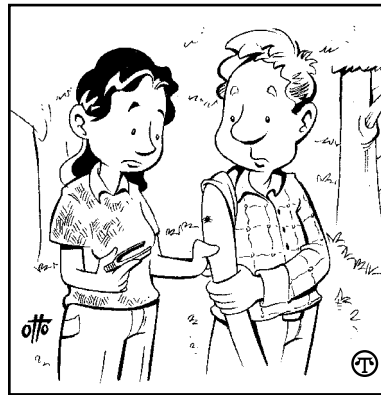
Worldwide, there are more than 850 tick species, and 30 major tick-borne diseases; the United States has 82 species of ticks that collectively can cause nine major diseases. These diseases include Ehrlichiosis, Babesiosis, Tick Paralysis, Tick-borne Relapsing Fever, Tularemia, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Colorado Tick Fever. Most of these diseases have symptoms similar to the flu, such as fever, chills, headache, muscle ache, vomiting and fatigue.

The risk of being bitten by an infected tick is greatest in the summer months, especially in May and June. This is the time of year when people, especially children, are most active outdoors. Make a habit of thoroughly checking yourself and others for the tiny ticks after outdoor activities and vacations.

The American College of Emergency Physicians warns people to be aware of the symptoms of tick-borne diseases and take preventive measures to reduce the possibility of infection from ticks:

- Wear light-colored clothing with a tight weave to spot ticks more easily and prevent contact with the skin.

- Always wear enclosed shoes.



- Wear long pants tucked into socks, long-sleeved shirts tucked into pants.

- Use an EPA-approved tick repellent. Read the manufacturer's directions and cautions before using. Wash off repellent when returning indoors.

- Keep long hair pulled back. When gardening, pruning shrubs, or otherwise handling soil and vegetation, wear light-colored gloves, spot-checking them for ticks frequently.

- Avoid sitting directly on the ground and stay on cleared, well-worn trails whenever possible.

- Spot-check yourself and others frequently for ticks on clothes; if you find one, there may be others—check thoroughly.

- Remove clothes after leaving tick-infested areas and, if possible, wash and dry them to eliminate any unseen ticks.

- Conduct a full-body check of yourself, your children and any outdoor pets from head to toe for ticks each night before going to bed. Be sure to check the scalp, behind the head and neck, in the ears, and behind any joints.

- If you find a tick, it should be removed with tweezers. Keep the tick in a vial labeled with the victim's name, location of bite site and the date. Be sure to watch the tick bite site and call your doctor if you notice any signs or symptoms of a tick-borne illness.

For more information about tick bites, visit www.acep.org.